

The Non-Ovidian Elizabethan epyllion:

Thomas Watson, Christopher Marlowe, Richard Barnfield

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*'I like short poems, but I want them to be epic.'* Alice Oswald<sup>1</sup>

**Prologue or preludium: Richard Barnfield's *Hellens Rape***

One of the most riotous mythological narrative poems of the Elizabethan 1590s is Richard Barnfield's *Hellens Rape* (1594), an experiment in hexameter verse, alliteratively subtitled 'A light Lanthorne for light Ladies'.<sup>2</sup> The rape of Helen is narrated by Barnfield like never before:

Adulterous Paris (then a Boy) kept sheepe as a shepheard  
 On Ida Mountaine, unknown to the King for a Keeper  
 Of sheep, on Ida Mountain, as a Boy, as a shepheard:  
 Yet such sheep he kept, and was so seemelie a shepheard,  
 Seemelie a Boy, so seemelie a youth, so seemelie a Younker,  
 That on Ide was not such a Boy, such a youth, such a Younker. (sig. G3v)

Miraculously, given this narrative pace, Paris manages to make himself known to King Priam, and persuade him that he ought to bring back his aunt 'Hesyone' from Greece. On his laddish outing across the Aegean, he is escorted by 'Telamour', 'lust-bewitched Alexis', and 'eyefull ... Argus', companions who prove predictably keen on a detour to 'Lacedaemon', where they are hosted by Helen in Menelaus's absence. This is how the disaster happens:

First they fell to the feast, and after fall to a Dauncing,  
And from a dance to a Trance, from a Trance they fell to a falling  
Either in others armes, and either in armes of another.

...

... Each one hies home to his own home

Save Lord and Ladie: ...

...

Well to their worke they goe, and bothe they jumble in one Bed:

Worke so well they like, that they still like to be working:

For Aurora mounts before he leaves to be mounting:

And Astraea fades before she faints to be falling:

(Helen a light Huswife, now a lightsome starre in Olympus.) (sig. G4v)

Helen is pleasurably ravished in her own bed and the poem ends here. Of her abduction to Troy, we hear not a word. With this pun on the titular ‘rape’, Barnfield mocks his readers’ expectations of an epic story, to give them instead an erotic narrative romp. His carefree prequel to the Trojan War denies any knowledge of an epic catastrophe to ensue from Helen’s extra-marital ‘jumble’. Barnfield toys not just with epic, but with moral readings of classical texts: his subtitle suggests that his poem will serve as ‘a light Lanthorne for light ladies’, yet by skipping the Trojan War, and concluding with this ‘light Huswife’s’ transformation into a ‘lightsome starre’, Barnfield offers the reader a radically different ‘lanthorne’ from the one promised.<sup>3</sup>

Barnfield’s little poem does, nevertheless, engage closely with epic. It namechecks various epic manoeuvres, as in this epic catalogue of the feast: ‘Briskets and Carawayes,

Comfets, Tart, Plate, Jelly, Ginge-bread, / Lymons and Medlars: and Dishes moe by a thousand' (sig. G4v); or this *ekphrasis* of Helen's rich palace:

Flowers were framd of flints, Walls Rubies, Rafters of Argent:

Pavements of Chrisolite, Windows contriv'd of a Christall

Vessels were of gold, with gold was each thing adorned:

Golden Webs more worth than a wealthy Souldan of Egypt (sig. G4r)

This is the same palace in which Telemachus and Nestor's son Peisistratus are welcomed and feasted in *Odyssey* IV. Some readers will note that Barnfield translates Telemachus's exclamation there - 'Ζηνός που τοιήδε γ' Ὀλυμποίου ἔνδοθεν αὐλή' (*Odyssey* IV, 74: The courts of Olympian Zeus must look like this...) - into his unique idiom: 'so stately a building, / Never... / ... was to be seene, if nere to be seene was Olympus' (sig. G4r). In the deliciously inane comparison to a 'wealthy Souldan of Egypt', such readers may also spot an allusive frolic on the gold gifted to Homer's Helen and Menelaus by King Polybus in Egypt, 'ὅθι πλεῖστα δόμοις ἐν κτήματα κεῖται' (*Odyssey* IV, 127) (where households are wealthiest). It is such epic-literate readers who will get the most out of the poem's final turn. These echoes invoke an arc which begins with these 'younkers'' merrymaking, and ends twenty years later with the melancholy Telemachus in search of news of the long-lost Odysseus; yet this is an arc Barnfield's poem provocatively claims to know nothing of. Inviting a particular mode of reading, the epyllion's generic proximity to epic enables it to assert the mythical, aesthetic, and ethical separateness of its own world. This interaction with the matrix of epic is crucial to its poetic work.

Barnfield's epyllic poetics is important because it hints at literary and classical effects we do not associate with English narrative poetry of this time. *Hellens Rape* displays an

allusive fluency in Greek material, and a well-developed reflection on the resources of the literary prequel and of the little epic as a genre. This essay argues that this constellation of interests was there in the poetic culture of the early 1590s and that they offer a new perspective on Christopher Marlowe's *Hero and Leander* and the development of the poetic tradition known as Elizabethan or 'Ovidian epyllia'. To understand this we need to reappraise the impact of the Greek epyllion on this period's poetic activities, not least through the innovative and popular classicism of Thomas Watson. This is the exploration I propose in this essay, taking Richard Barnfield's mid-1590s perspective on English poetics as our guide.

### **Shepherds and lovers: remembering Watson in 1594**

Barnfield's epic idiom repays closer attention. Playing with contemporaries' attempts to write in English hexameters, it strongly recalls the work proposed by Thomas Nash in 1589 as a beacon to such 'high-witted indeavours': Abraham Fraunce's 'excellent translation of Maister Thomas Watson's sugred *Amyntas*.'<sup>4</sup> This is Fraunce's bucolic *Amyntas*, remembering life before the death of Phyllis:

Under a beech many times wee sate most sweetely together,  
Under a broade beech tree that sunbeames might not anoy us,  
Either in others armes, stil looking either on other:  
Both, many rimes singing, and verses both many making,  
And both so many woords with kisses so many mingling.<sup>5</sup>

Appearing in 1587, fast on the heels of Watson's 1585 Latin poem, this astonishingly popular work was reprinted in 1588, 1589, 1591, and 1596. But by 1593, the fruits of such poetic endeavours (and their association with Gabriel Harvey) had left Nash much less impressed:

‘the Hexamiter ... goes twitching and hopping in our language like a man running upon quagmiers up the hill in one Syllable and down the dale in another’.<sup>6</sup> Barnfield agreed, judging from one of his contributions to *Greenes Funeralls*. Though some, he pens in ‘Sonnet VII’, consider poetry a waste of time:

Yet I appeale to the pen of pierceless Poet Amyntas,  
Matchles Amintas minde, to the minde of Matchles Amintas  
Sweete bonny Phillis love, to the love of sweete bonny Phillis,  
Whether pen, or minde, or love, of Phillis Amintas  
Love, or minde, or pen, of pen-love-minder Amintas [etc.]<sup>7</sup>

No waste of time at all. Barnfield is probably in witty repartee here with Ferdinando Stanley, a literary patron who adopted the Amyntas persona at this time in like-minded burlesque of Fraunce’s repetitive poetics.<sup>8</sup> Stanley’s verses were circulating in late 1593, with Watson and Fraunce both recently dead, and *Greenes Funeralls* was published in early 1594. Barnfield’s *Affectionate Shepherd*, the collection that contains *Hellens Rape*, appeared later that year, and featured a further tribute to ‘Amintas’ - most likely the by-then also dead Stanley - in which the poet identified himself as a beneficiary of his ‘Love’ and ‘pure affection’.<sup>9</sup> The title poem, structured as two complaints on successive days in the emotional career of the central pastoral figure, paralleled Watson’s (and Fraunce’s) *Amyntas*. Barnfield’s collection, then, with this allusion, the homage to Amintas, and the facetious hexameters of *Hellens Rape*, was partly about English poetics in the early 1590s, in particular poetics in the wake of the tremendous influence of Watson’s poem.

It was not just the English hexameter that gave hostages to fortune. The Greek hexameter, when its parataxis and patterns of iteration were rendered word-for-word into

utilitarian Latin could be equally entertaining. This is Paris keeping his flocks in Colluthus's *Abduction of Helen*, a short epic from the fifth-sixth century CE, in the widely available *ad verbum* translation of Michael Neander:

Paris vero adolescens (adhuc) *pascebat* paternas oues

*Pascens* (eas) seorsum ad fluenta Anauri.

Seorsum quidem gregem agrestium taurorum *pascebat*,

Seorsum etiam *pascebat* greges, *pascentium* (se) ouium ...<sup>10</sup>

(Young Paris herded his father's flocks. On either side of the mountain torrent's stream he tended his herds, numbering separately the herd of thronging bulls, separately counting the droves of feeding flocks.)

In Colluthus's Greek, this elaborate description of Paris's shepherding logistics is an erudite game in versifying synonyms for sheep-keeping: νομεύω, ποιμαίνω, πεμπάζομαι, διαμετρέω, βόσκομαι.<sup>11</sup> Standing in for all of them, Neander's useful 'pasco' quickly transforms the passage into epic parody. Watson published a paraphrase of the poem in elegant Latin hexameters in 1586, a year after his *Amyntas*. He probably used Neander's crib, and probably learned from it to avoid repetition at this point.<sup>12</sup> Watson, the most accomplished Latin poet of his generation according to Nash, was Nash's confederate in the mockery of Harvey and the English hexameter, as well as a poetic innovator in the vernacular, a popular dramatist, and a constitutional rogue.<sup>13</sup> Colluthus's epyllion, and its link via Watson to the roguish literary community Barnfield was joining with this poetic volume, could well have inspired *Hellens Rape*.

In one of the many editions of Neander's Colluthus, intended for educational use, Barnfield and Watson could have found a dedicatory epistle ripe for a sendup. In it, Neander

argued that adolescents would learn from this author, not just the Greek language, but also other useful things, to wit:

ab ipso Deo, qui ... impuritatem ... punit gravissime, excitari magistratus, & mitti exercitus militares, qui raptus, adulteria, nuptias prohibitas, & quascunque alias foedas & turpes libidines puniant, bellis, caedibus, terrarum ac imperiorum etiam potentissimorum eversionibus.<sup>14</sup>

(that God himself, who ... severely punishes impurity ... raises up magistrates and sends armies to punish rapes, adulteries, forbidden marriages, and all other foul and base lusts through wars, slaughters and the razing of countries and even most powerful kingdoms.)

This is probably wishful thinking. Colluthus's tonally rich poem contains little invitation to moralise. It describes, for instance, a freshly bathed Paris approaching Helen's palace with a circumspect gait, lest the wind dishevel his hair or 'μὴ πόδες ἡμερόεντες ὑποχραίνονται κονίῃς' (line 232) (his sexy feet get fouled by dust). Watson loved this bit: his own, wittily contrived 'golden' hexameter - 'Ne niveas turpi foedaret pulvere plantas' (line 241) (lest he soil his snow-white feet with foul dust) - smeared, by verbal proximity, 'niveas' (snow-white) with 'turpi' (foul) and 'plantas' (feet) with 'pulvere' (dust). Earlier on, Colluthus imagines the clinching moment in the judgment of Paris - the defining event of the poem and of the myth of Troy - as a surprise striptease by Aphrodite:

Ἡ δ' ἄνδρ' ἐκ βαθύκολπον, ἐξ ἡέρα γυμνώσασα  
κόλπον, ἀνηώρησε καὶ οὐκ ἠδέσσατο Κύπρις.  
Χειρὶ δ' ἐλαφρίζουσα μελίφρονα δεσμὸν Ἑρώτων

στῆθος ἅπαν γύμνωσε καὶ οὐκ ἐμνήσατο μαζῶν. (lines 154–7)

(And the Cyprus-born lifted her deep-folded fine robe, baring her chest to the open air, and felt no shame. Loosening with her hand the band of desires that brings delight to the mind, she bared her bosom entirely, and was not mindful of her breasts.)

Colluthus's readers have already been introduced to this 'band'. Nervous before the contest, Aphrodite puts faith in her weapon: 'μελίφρονα δεσμὸν Ἐρώτων / ... / κεστὸν, ὅθεν φιλότιτος ἐμῆς ἐμὸν οἷστρον ἐλοῦσαι ... γυναικες' (lines 94–6) (the band of desires that brings delight to the mind, ... the *cestos* which makes women feel my sting, the frenzy of my passion...). Homer's *cestos* is the bewitching embroidered band Hera borrows from Aphrodite in the celebrated, extraordinary episode of her seduction of Zeus in *Iliad* XIV. In it, says Homer, lie all charms, 'ἐνὶ μὲν φιλότις, ἐν δ' ἥμερος, ἐν δ' ὀαριστὺς / πάρφασις, ἣ τ' ἔκλεψε νόον πύκα περ φρονεόντων' (*Iliad*, XIV, 215-16) (passion, desire, love-talk, and persuasion, that seduces the mind even of those who are prudent). Colluthus engages this Homeric object in narrating her victory. But, having prepared us to see its magic in action, he humorously literalises it, concentrating its powers in the distinctly unmetaphorical act of its removal: in conversation with Colluthus, the seduction of Zeus in the *Iliad* seems startlingly graphic. Mischievously casting the judgment as Hera's first lesson in the efficacy of the *cestos*, Colluthus's imitation brings out the difference and the unlikely similarity between the world of his dreamy erotic epyllion and the universe of Homer's martial epic. The gap becomes a gulf as Colluthus multiplies verbal guises in which to dwell on Aphrodite's breasts as much as possible: *κόλπος*, *στῆθος*, *μαζοί*. Watson took good note. Instead of attempting to shadow the Greek's play on synonyms, he recreated its powerful visuality with a descriptive flourish:



[Cypria] Blandius exhibuit nudato pectore mammas,

Nec puduit quicquam turgentes mollibus ipsas

Pandere flaminibus. (lines 163–5)

(The Cyprus-born showed her breasts more seductively having bared her chest, nor was she at all ashamed to lay them open, swelling in the soft breeze.)

Not quite the shameless erotic frolic that is Barnfield's *Hellens Rape*, Colluthus's poem could certainly have pointed the way to it, not least in Watson's hands.

### **The epyllion and its discontents: classical, early modern, Ovidian**

Barnfield's short, irreverent mythological epic spoof, with its amatory content and exuberant language has never been described as a late Elizabethan epyllion, though these works are marked by very similar characteristics. Neither has Watson's version of Colluthus's short mythological epic. This goes back to how the term 'epyllion' became relevant to this moment of English literary culture. What scholars tend to refer to as the Elizabethan epyllion comprises a relatively fixed canon of poems, first proposed in Paul W. Miller's 1958 article 'The Elizabethan minor epic' and embodied as a corpus in 1963 in Elizabeth Story Donno's influential anthology, *Elizabethan Minor Epics*.<sup>15</sup> This canon starts with Thomas Lodge's *Scillaes Metamorphosis* (1589/90), and continues some three years later with Marlowe's *Hero and Leander* (entered posthumously in the Stationers' Register on 28 September 1593 but published in 1598), Shakespeare's *Venus and Adonis* (published in 1593, after being entered on 18 April), and such works as Thomas Edwards' *Cephalus and Procris* and *Narcissus* (entered 22 October 1593, published 1595), and Thomas Heywood's *Oenone and Paris* (1594); it stretches to as late as Francis Beaumont's *Salmacis and Hermaphroditus* (1602). It was Miller who proposed to call this genus of works 'epyllia'. The family

resemblances between them had been noted earlier, with critics often referring to them as ‘Ovidian poems’.<sup>16</sup> Miller, however, believed that new light could be shed on their genre by classical studies. Marjorie Crump had recently argued - more extensively than anyone before - that the ‘epyllion’ was a distinct classical genre. Invented by the Alexandrians in the third century BCE, it was a ‘short narrative poem’ (of variable length), concerned (most commonly) with a love story; it was (sometimes) ‘decorated with descriptive passages’ and (often) employed ‘the dramatic form’; but its most distinctive constitutive feature was the digression, which could overshadow the frame tale.<sup>17</sup> Her examples included some of Theocritus’s *Idylls* and Callimachus’s fragmentary *Hecale* in Greek, and Catullus 64 and the pseudo-Virgilian *Ciris* in Latin; importantly, Crump argued that epyllic techniques had influenced Ovid’s epic of short stories and dizzying digressions, and for her, this was the genre’s last ancient incarnation. Key to the ‘epyllion’ bequeathed to Miller, then, was a particular narrative aesthetic. Its classical instances did not include mock epic, nor did they include late Greek epic narratives like Colluthus’s *Abduction of Helen*, and its near contemporary, Musaeus’s *Hero and Leander*, neither of which features a digression.

To Miller, the ‘Ovidian poems’ of the 1590s all seemed to display some of these characteristics as well as fulfilling the length criterion. His approach to genre was taxonomical, not historical. Based on it, Marlowe’s *Hero and Leander*, with its lavish *ekphrases*, its dramatic speeches, and above all its startling digression on Mercury, was the Elizabethan epyllion *par excellence*. Understood thus, the epyllic exemplarity of Marlowe’s work owed much to Ovid but, paradoxically, nothing to the short epic of Musaeus which was one of its sources. More generally, this ‘classical epyllion’ offered nothing to the English tradition that is not already there in Ovid, save a precedent for brevity. Even this was soon challenged, as classicists contested the view that the features enumerated by Crump added up to a genre. One, Walter Allen, hastened to alert the English scholar who had been misled. In

his resoundingly entitled, ‘The non-existent classical epyllion’, which appeared in the same journal and year as Miller’s essay, he wrote: ‘I fear that Mr. Miller has caught a tiger in his Classical comparison. ... [T]here never was such a literary genre’.<sup>18</sup> In response to this disconcerting news, Renaissance critics agreed to adopt the tiger. They continued to use ‘epyllion’, now void of a classical referent, apologetically and heuristically, for its suggestion of something more formally distinctive about these poems than their Ovidian resemblances.<sup>19</sup> The classical term, having disowned any link to a classical form almost from the start, has given English scholars a way of referring to the poems as a distinct, new 1590s genre. In so far as their classical inspiration is concerned, these works, first grouped together as ‘Ovidian poems’ and now often referred to as ‘Ovidian epyllia’, have continued to be seen entirely as a chapter in the afterlife of Ovid.<sup>20</sup> But the term ‘epyllion’ has made a difference. It has emphasised, and arguably intensified and calcified perceived affinities between these specific works, affinities which may seem more exclusive to us when we view all of them together than they did as this proposed new genre took shape. When Georgia Brown, for instance, writes that John Marston’s *Metamorphosis of Pigmaliions Image* (1598) is ‘the most characteristic of all epyllia’, she is clearly looking back on the tradition with Marston.<sup>21</sup> Yet it is useful to try and imagine this same tradition instead from the perspective of Barnfield in 1594, a year after the epyllia of Shakespeare and Marlowe, formative for the ‘new genre’, are brought to the press. Barnfield’s *Affectionate Shepherd* borrows the stanza of Shakespeare’s *Venus and Adonis*, more than a shade of its mature wooer’s desperation, and its Ovidian texture of psychological tragicomedy; it builds on the homoerotic sensuality of Marlowe’s *Hero and Leander*, its descriptive exuberance, and its Ovidian digression; but it also echoes the same poet’s ‘Passionate Shepherd’, and, thinking on the threshold between pastoral and epic, alludes - as we have seen - to *Amyntas* by Marlowe’s friend Watson; finally, it plays with the English hexameter in which the *Amyntas* had had such huge success, and

experiments with a form which scales down epic, that may have been associated with Watson. Looked at from this perspective, English poets at this time are indeed thinking about narrative poetry through the *Metamorphoses*; but they are also reflecting, with and without Ovid, on how to write small poems but get them to be epic. This ambition is rooted in their familiarity with, and creatively angled positioning in relation to epic; it is part of experimenting with the boundaries of pastoral; but it also has to do with a number of short, primarily Greek, ancient poems in the epic mode that were far more prominent in the Renaissance than today. Appraising the influence of this group of poems alters our sense of the classical energies in play in late Elizabethan poetry, and the place of Greek literature within them. But it can also shift our perspective on the poetic landscape out of which the ‘Elizabethan epyllia’ emerged, and the horizon of expectations we might bring to them. Barnfield’s perspective in 1594, I suggest, reconfigures the place of both Watson and the Greek epyllion at this watershed moment for 1590s narrative poetry.

Most classicists today would say that reports of the classical epyllion’s non-existence have been greatly exaggerated. Whatever the truth of Crump’s arguments, short poems written in the distinctive idiom of epic do survive from Greek and Roman antiquity; such works articulate their poetic statement in conversation with epic, and their scale is necessarily part of that conversation. Colluthus’s *Abduction of Helen* and Musaeus’s *Hero and Leander* are works of this kind; so is the pseudo-Virgilian mythological *Ciris*, the pseudo-Virgilian parodic pastoral-epic *Gnat*, and the pseudo-Homeric mock epic *Battle of the Frogs and Mice* (*Batrachomyomachia*). Largely the province of specialists today, these works had an altogether different visibility in the Renaissance. The pan-European popularity of *Hero and Leander* is well documented.<sup>22</sup> Held in high esteem because its author was conflated with the mythical inventor of poetry, it was one of the first Greek texts to see print, and was published and republished in the sixteenth century in multiple cities and editions. Its commonest

incarnation was probably as a primer in the Greek hexameter, alongside other suitably chosen texts for linguistic practice.<sup>23</sup> Often rendered into Latin, including in England by the talented William Gager in 1578/80,<sup>24</sup> it also drew the interest of some key vernacular poets before Marlowe: Bernardo Tasso and Clément Marot produced versions in the first half of the century, in 1537 and 1541 respectively, as did Juan Boscán, whose 1543 *Leandro* was admired by Fraunce.<sup>25</sup> Less well documented is the early modern life of Colluthus's *Abduction of Helen*.<sup>26</sup> This poem, too, could have a pedagogical function: Neander taught it at the Reformed gymnasium at Ilfeld, before editing it for similar use across Europe. But it would have been best known in connection with Homer's epics, since it was often printed in Homeric editions, and mentioned in paratexts as a prequel to the *Iliad*. These editions circulated in England and put Colluthus on the literary map for anyone exploring Homer's epics. For instance, in an annotated copy of Homer in St John's College, Cambridge, which does not print this poem, a reader noted: 'Qui cupit historiam integram trojanam cognoscere legat ... narrationem de pomo Eridis, de iudicio Paridis, profectione in Graeciam, ac raptu Helenae apud Coluthum poetam Homeri nonnunquam in decimosexto adiectum.' (Whoever wants to become acquainted with the full story of Troy, may read ... the narrative of the apple of Discord, the judgment of Paris, the expedition to Greece, and the rape of Helen in Colluthus, often appended to Homer in *decimosexto*.)<sup>27</sup> Jean de Sponde, editor of the magisterial 1583 commentary on the epics that was crucial to George Chapman, similarly sketched the 'Argumentum' of the *Iliad*, meaning the whole story of the Trojan war, referring his readers to the very elegant poem ('eleganti sane poemate') of Colluthus for its origins.<sup>28</sup> And precisely because the reception of the *Iliad* was intertwined with the *Abduction of Helen*, many early modern Homeric translators also translated Colluthus, making the poem available in Latin and the vernaculars.<sup>29</sup> An English translation and commentary was printed in 1651, where it was presented as 'a Prologue or Preludium' to the *Iliad*; and it is a mark of the sharp

change in the poem's fortunes after this period that the next English version would be the one in the Loeb edition of 1928.<sup>30</sup> A very different work from these two, the mock-epic *Batrachomyomachia* shared the reception trajectories of both. Ascribed to Homer, it was seen as a satirical flourish written for recreation, or else 'is pueris, quos in Graecia passim docebat' (for the children Homer taught throughout Greece).<sup>31</sup> An inseparable part of the Homeric canon, it appeared with the epics even more regularly than Colluthus; and as an ideal text for readying aspiring scholars to approach the Greek hexameter in its more serious guises, it formed part of the collection of educational texts that also included Musaeus.<sup>32</sup> Homer's *Batrachomyomachia*, translated more often than any other ancient epyllion, was probably the most famous example of the epic register taking a light break.

Epic was the generic lens through which these poems were often viewed. All three form part of Henri Estienne's 1566 landmark edition of Greek 'heroic poetry', i.e. epic.<sup>33</sup> J. C. Scaliger, commenting in his 1561 *Poetice* on Aristotle's assumption that epic is long compared to tragedy, observes that epics do indeed tend to be long, 'non tamen semper cujusmodi vides apud Musaeum' (yet not always, as you see in Musaeus).<sup>34</sup> Lodovico Castelvetro, in his 1570 exposition of Aristotle's *Poetics*, echoes the view that *Hero and Leander* disproves the theory that epic needs to be long.<sup>35</sup> Building on this tradition, Alonso López Pinciano likewise presents *Hero and Leander* as the key example of 'epica ... breve', and insists elsewhere that the subject of an epic can be a love story, as for instance in the case of Musaeus.<sup>36</sup> Both these critics consider epic 'magnitude' in ways that impinge on these works. In the same discussion where he brings in Musaeus, Castelvetro argues that it is not the duration of epic that needs to have magnitude but its action; specifically, just like the action of a tragedy, it needs to involve a reversal. Elsewhere, Pinciano reflects on the 'concepto' of a literary work or one's idea of the subject ('la noticia que el hombre de la cosa concibe'). The 'concepto' of the *Batrachomyomachia* is great and lofty ('magnifica y alta')

just like that of *Iliad* or the *Aeneid*, he argues, for it treated its lowly matter ('lo baxo') loftily ('altamente').<sup>37</sup> Scaliger, on the other hand, sets out the narratological norms for composing epic and ends by justifying Musaeus for not following them, on the grounds that even though writing an epic, his subject matter is 'quasi tragoedia'.<sup>38</sup> What is striking is the way all these early modern critics defend these works as liminal cases of epic, so that they come to define the genre's contours. Interestingly, editors and scholars often referred to them as 'ποιημάτια' or 'poematia' (little poems).<sup>39</sup> The word could apply to any short poem, such as an epigram;<sup>40</sup> yet these long works are most likely to seem notably brief if they are species of epic.

Beginning his 1581 lectures on the *Batrachomyomachia*, Martinus Crusius announced that having sailed through the vast sea ('magno ... mari') of the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*, he was now about to turn into a clear river ('limpidum quondam rivum declinabo').<sup>41</sup> A sense of direction, of positioning in relation to epic, is crucial to these poems. They are always looking to epic - ambitiously forward, disenchantedly back, calmly sideways, playfully aslant. This idea of direction was reflected in the personal experience of them by those exploring Greek literature. These were works that made the epic idiom available for linguistic training, for translation, and imitation, before or without taking on the epic's full challenges. Marco Girolamo Vida's advice to budding poets was 'not to venture to compose long *Iliads*' before they could 'tell in verse of the fearsome fates of a gnat, or of how in boundless battle the thundering mouse dealt death to the croaking troops of marsh-loving frogs'.<sup>42</sup> But as Jessica Wolfe stresses, even with the *Batrachomyomachia*, this was far from the only imaginable positioning. Unlike the poems in the *Appendix Virgiliana*, none of these Greek epyllia were seen primarily as juvenilia, but rather as accomplished works that 'offer[ed] up competing ... treatments of epic values and norms'.<sup>43</sup> In an epigram often printed with *Hero and Leander*, Marcus Musurus contrasts martial epic with the poem of Musaeus, which inscribed on some puny pages how much Cupid could do by trifling with his little hands ('μικρῆσιν ...

σελίδεσσιν / ὅσσ' ὀλίγαις παίζων χερσὶν ἔοργεν ἔρωζ'): amatory subject and small scale are cast in a competitive relation to epic, not as a step towards it.<sup>44</sup> Crucial to establishing that relation is the fact that in their tone and expressive capabilities, these poems are in dialogue with epic. Early modern commentators were aware of these works' energetic allusiveness, whether they thought of Homer as reworking Musaeus, or of Colluthus as drawing on Homer. They saw, for instance, that Aphrodite's victory performance in Colluthus is in conversation with the *Iliad* - that it recycles and creatively repositions a Homeric invention, so that the 'prelude' relies on intimate knowledge of that great work.<sup>45</sup> In this allusion they may have seen a demonstration of the epyllion's ability to mobilise and twist the literary expectations of epic-literate readers. Barnfield's *Hellens Rape* certainly suggests they saw such possibilities in the brief epic, and that the prequel possessed its own distinctive capacities for deploying them. His perspective, I believe, opens up a different view of this period's micro-poetics.

### **Watson, the Greek epyllion, and the prequel**

Watson's 1585 *Amyntas* is written in playfully allusive Latin hexameters. It is a series of lamentations by the shepherd Amyntas on the death of Phillis, which grow more desperate the less he sleeps over ten days, and culminate on the eleventh in his suicide and metamorphosis into the amaranth. This, Watson narrates in strongly Ovidian accents. Watson described his *Amyntas* as a light poetic project like Homer's *Batrachomyomachia* or Virgil's *Gnat*, on account of its shallow subject matter.<sup>46</sup> He probably got to explore Homer's mock-epic at an impressionable moment as a student at Winchester College, where the headmaster, Christopher Johnson, devoted ample class time to his own version of it in erudite Latin hexameters.<sup>47</sup> The parallel with *Amyntas* may have thus felt stronger to Watson than it does to us. As Staton once observed, Watson's wildly popular frivolous poem is an overlooked but key precursor of the 'Ovidian epyllia' of the next poetic generation.<sup>48</sup> In 1595, William



Covell, one of Shakespeare's first admirers, referred to 'Wanton Adonis' as 'Watson's heyre'.<sup>49</sup> The poem definitely anticipates the witty eroticism of those works. Amyntas' memories of Phillis - of which we have already had a taste in Fraunce's translation - continue:

Ejus et interdum tangebam mollia colla,

...

... dum tractabat eburno

Pollice quas habui sparsas lanugine malas.

Forsan et ausus eram teretes quandoque papillas

Indigna mulcere manu, placideque movere. (I, 34-40)

(Sometimes I would touch her soft neck... while she handled with her ivory thumb what sparse hairs I had on my downy cheek. And sometimes perhaps I would dare to touch her round breasts lightly with my undeserving hand, and gently stir them.)

Watson's next literary venture was his 1586 *Colluthus*. A mini-epic in Latin hexameters in which a shepherd finds himself digressing into an amatory epic adventure, it was anything but worlds apart from the *Amyntas*. This poem too - now a bibliographical rarity - may have had an instant appeal, for Thomas Coxeter gives us notice of a lost *Colluthus* by Marlowe in 'English rhyme', dating to 1587.<sup>50</sup> It would have made a fitting successor to what was probably Marlowe's first work of erotic classicism, his version of Ovid's *Amores*. And if it was inspired by Watson - with whom Marlowe was close by 1589 - we have here the beginnings of an innovative amatory poetics in which pastoral, Greek epyllion, and the influence of Ovid all have a role.

By 1592, these connections assume a concrete expression, as Marlowe sees to print his friend's *Amintae Gaudia*, or *The Joys of Amyntas*, shortly after his death. This series of epistles and eclogues narrates the young wooing and cooing of Amyntas and Phillis with gracefully sparkling erudition. The last eclogue hints at Phillis' impending death, but only in a prophecy the lovers nonchalantly ignore. Watson's 'prequel' clearly bears the stamp of another work. Its fourth eclogue digresses into what is effectively an inset epyllion, four times as long as any other part of the poem, in which Amyntas narrates a dream, all about Venus's preparations for the occasion of Philip Sidney's transformation into the star Astrophilus. The epyllion, which is even set off from the rest of the text by a subtitle ('*Amintae insomnium*'), is the heart of the poem's appeal to its dedicatee, the Countess of Pembroke. Amyntas's dream is not wholly unlike the vision revealed to another famous shepherd. In it, Venus is seized by the same competitive urge as when she stole the golden apple of the Hesperides from the rival goddesses by the boy's judgment (*AG Ecl.* IV, 58-9: '*Hesperidumque deis rivalibus abstulit aurum / iudicio pueri*'); even more tellingly, she wants to appear no less beautiful than when she fed the burning eyes of wanton Paris (l. 57: '*lascivi Paridis flagrantia lumina pavit*'). This is, unmistakably, Colluthus's goddess. This time, she keeps her clothes on, but does send Mercury on an epic mission to fetch Juno's casket filled with a pink mist of allure, '*rosea ... pixida plenam / Nube venustatis*' (lines 76-77), in an allusion to the *cestos* she herself once lent Juno, while she goes to find the actual *cestos*, mislaid, apparently, somewhere on Cyprus. Aligned with the festive mood of the gods, Watson's inset epyllion turns Sidney's death into an occasion for poetic and erotic celebration. As it does so, it reflects the joyful mode of *Amintae Gaudia* as a whole, which pointedly shuts out tragedy from its universe. Or rather, it shields its characters - whether it is the deathless Olympians feasting Sidney, or the blissfully unsuspecting lovers - from the tragedy and loss that are foremost in the readers' thoughts. Watson may have seen something

incipiently like this artful double perspective in Colluthus, whose prequel to the *Iliad* focuses on the comedy and drama of the abduction, only hinting at the great war as yet unthought of in its world. This is the particular literary capital the prequel can make out of the epyllion's capacity to assert its distinctiveness from the better-known world of epic.

At least one close contemporary seems to have made a link between *Amintae Gaudia*, Colluthus, and the prequel. 'J. T.', translator of part of the *Amintae Gaudia* in 1594, was probably the John Trussell who published in 1595 *The First Rape of Faire Helen*, yet another Elizabethan narrative poem outside the epyllic 'canon'.<sup>51</sup> In other sources of this myth, a young Helen is abducted by Theseus, and restored after her brothers raise an army and destroy a small town in Attica.<sup>52</sup> In Trussell's poem, by contrast, Helen's ghost confesses to being raped and abandoned by the cravenly Athenian before she was married off to a haplessly unsuspecting Menelaus.<sup>53</sup> With this risqué emphasis on scandal and concealment, Trussell invites unkind connections between this story and the notorious outcome of Helen's marriage. Though not chronologically situating itself in ignorance of the known catastrophe, this epyllion, too, makes use of the prequel's literary resource of being automatically read in relation to the known. An eminently topical version of the known in this case was Barnfield's 1594 *Hellens Rape*, which similarly - as Trussell, perhaps, would have the reader note - is no transnational *casus belli*, but a sexual escapade. Yet Trussell's Latin title-page, *Raptus I Helenae*, seems to allude instead to Colluthus's or Watson's *Helenae Raptus*, grandly announcing an epyllic prequel to a celebrated epyllic prequel.

### **Marlowe's *Hero and Leander*: 'desunt nonnulla'?**

All of this changes the horizon of generic expectations relevant to that archetypal Elizabethan epyllion, *Hero and Leander*. In one of the poem's high points, Marlowe's Leander, 'rude in love, and raw' (line 545) begins to suspect that for all the greedy 'kisses' and 'sweet ...

embracements' (line 513) of his first time together with Hero, 'some amorous rites or other were neglected' (line 548).<sup>54</sup> Musaeus's epyllion was probably playing on his mind here, for in his great wooing speech, Musaeus's Leander urges Hero to embrace the rite [*thesmos*] of desires that brings delight to the mind, 'μελίφρονα θεσμόν Ἑρώτων' (line 147). Coming across this elegant metaphor, Marlowe may have realised that, by means of the softest letter-change, Colluthus had turned it into a euphemism for Aphrodite's erotic accessory: the band [*desmos*] of desires that brings delight to the mind (line 156: 'μελίφρονα δεσμόν Ἑρώτων').<sup>55</sup> Certainly, if Marlowe's epyllion keeps circling back (as Gordon Braden has shown) to the haunting language of Musaeus's amatory piece, its creative energy is also indebted, at least indirectly, to the protean tone, fleeting mischief, and double perspective of Colluthus's *Abduction*.<sup>56</sup>

Marlowe's biographer Patrick Honan sees *Hero and Leander* as a late work, as most critics do, and links it to *Amintae Gaudia*, in that both poems celebrate 'young lovers who know almost nothing of love'.<sup>57</sup> The parallel, however, is perhaps even stronger. Marlowe refers in his poem to the 'tragedy divine Musaeus sung' (line 52). In doing so, he could be differentiating Musaeus's epyllion from his own, which, at least as it stands, ends on the delightfully gauche consummation of the pair's love, omitting the reversal of Musaeus's 'quasi tragoedia'. This would make Marlowe's poem a sort of prequel which, like Watson's *Amintae Gaudia*, denies any knowledge of the disaster to happen. Looking at English poetics from Barnfield's vantage point in 1594 suggests that alongside Ovid's pervasive influence, the Greek epyllion and the prequel were vividly present and closely intertwined in the poetic micro-culture most pertinent to Marlowe at this time. This constitutes external evidence that the poem is finished. This early testament is particularly suggestive, given that our basic evidence to the contrary dates to 1598, five years on from Marlowe's death, in one of the most swiftly metamorphosing decades in English poetics.<sup>58</sup> Moreover, this same recalibration

of these poets' classical interests and generic investments can make visible powerful internal testimony to the same effect. In imitating the double perspective of Watson's *Amintae Gaudia*, Marlowe's *Hero and Leander* makes, I argue, agile and sophisticated use of the little epic's perfidious generic affiliation: its intimate connection to epic and simultaneous capacity to declare a rebellious and idiosyncratic discreteness from it.

Take the turning-point to the story as Marlowe tells it: Cupid's suit to the Fates on the behalf of the lovers at lines 385–482. When Cupid wounds Hero in a fit of pique, he is immediately gripped by remorse, and visits the Destinies to 'ma[k]e request / Both might enjoy each other, and be blest' (lines 379–80). They answer not in words, but with a withering look. Here, Marlowe embarks on his labyrinthine digression into a tale that explains the Fates' hostility to Cupid, and upon re-emerging, recaps: 'Then muse not Cupid's suit no better sped' (line 483). But what does 'no better' mean, and for whom? Just before Musaeus's Leander drowns, the poet says, abstractly: 'Ἔρως δ' οὐκ ἤρκεσε Μοίρας' (line 322) (Cupid could not stay the Fates). Yet the reader who read one text into the other would be doing so on their own initiative. To interpret the Destinies' scowl as a prophecy of the ending we know from other sources, is to admit into the poem something Marlowe has deliberately left out. Marlowe, that is, makes the reader alone guilty of any thought of that fatal ending. Epic-literate readers are doubly guilty. For in epic, two-part wishes like Cupid's have a bad history. When, in the *Iliad*, Achilles prays to Zeus that Patroclus may win glory and come back safe, 'τῷ δ' ἕτερον μὲν ἔδωκε πατήρ, ἕτερον δ' ἀνένευσε' (*Iliad*, XVI, 250) (one part the father granted him, and the other denied); and when Arruns in the *Aeneid* prays that he may kill Camilla and return home, Phoebus 'voti ... succedere partem / mente dedit, partem volucris dispersit in auras' (*Aeneid*, XI, 794–5) (granted half the prayer, but half upon the passing breeze he threw). The carefully constructed two-part wish is a silent allusion that prompts the readers' epic memory, involving them in the challenge of telling this story

differently. All the more so as Cupid's wounding of Hero comes just after he 'beats down her prayers with his wings, / Her vows above the empty air he flings' (lines 369–70). Tiptoeing around the epic answer, Marlowe makes the matrix of epic activate the threat of death, even as the poem itself manages to escape it, and remain innocent of anything other than the giddy drama of youthful desire.

Something similar happens when Leander takes his clothes off to swim to Hero. Marlowe may have noticed that Musaeus's Leander ties his clothes around his head before jumping in (lines 251–2), and may have remembered that swimming with one's clothes on is not a good omen in the *Odyssey*. When Odysseus almost drowns, the nymph Leucothea advises him to abandon his raft and clothes, and swim instead with just her 'κρήδεμνον' (*Odyssey*, V, 346) (veil) tied around him. This is how he makes it to Nausicaa's land. Marlowe's memory of the incident may have been triggered by the fact that, as Musaeus's salt-encrusted Leander emerges on Sestos, the sequence (at lines 264–71) redistributes elements from Nausicaa's reception of Odysseus. An earlier moment in Musaeus brought Odysseus and Nausicaa to other readers' minds. Hero's yielding protestation to Leander's wooing - Englished by Marlowe as 'Who taught thee rhetoric to deceive a maid?' (line 338) - reminded Crusius of the 'naufagus ... & nudus & supplex' (shipwrecked, naked and suppliant) Odysseus who wins over Nausicaa by means of rhetoric.<sup>59</sup> And to Scaliger, Odysseus's celebrated supplication speech to Nausicaa seemed merely an insipid imitation of Leander's wooing.<sup>60</sup> For whichever reason, this part of the *Odyssey* does become reactivated in Marlowe's writing. His Leander, as unaware of epic danger as he is mindless of social niceties, simply takes his clothes off and jumps in, unwittingly placing himself in a well-omened position. Comically, his nakedness does win him the (not un-self-interested) tender good will of Neptune, and we know that this Leander will make it, when Neptune 'put Helle's bracelet on his arm, / And swore the sea should never do him harm' (lines 663–4);

this is after all the Hellespont, named after Leucothea's niece, Helle. To the reader with an epic subconscious, the bare-bodied swimmer with just the bracelet tied around his arm is an Odyssean allusion. Unbeknownst to him, Leander is swimming in safety. This same reader, however, also knows that the sense of danger has all along been theirs, not the text's – it is activated by the matrix of epic and that is where Marlowe leaves it.

Had Leander read *Odyssey* VI, he would have known that when a man washes up ashore with no clothes on, delicacy is of the essence in approaching a maiden. Innocent as he is of epic, he simply knocks on Hero's door, 'Where seeing a naked man, she screeched for fear, / Such sights as this to tender maids are rare, / And ran into the dark herself to hide.'

(lines 721–3) Compare Nausicaa's handmaidens, faced with the stark naked Odysseus:

‘σμερδαλέος δ’ αὐτῇσι φάνη... / τρέσσαν δ’ ἄλλυδις ἄλλη’ (*Odyssey*, VI, 135–8: ‘he seemed terrible to them... and they fled in fear, one here, one there’). Hero's comical ‘screech’ shows her thoroughly lacking in the presence of mind that differentiates Nausicaa from her maids and helps her resolve a tightrope social situation with almost immaculate decorum. Yet neither Leander's, nor Hero's failures with decorum lead to failure in the end. In differing from their Homeric predecessors, this couple only heighten the text's refusal to acknowledge what there is to fear. The *Odyssey* gives Marlowe a very erudite joke about a naked youth and a maiden, but also a language for distancing and sheltering Hero and Leander from society, and leaving them to tussle with desire alone.

Epic, then, strengthens the link between nakedness, innocence, and success. Here, we come to the last two lines of the poem, where Night ‘o’ercome with anguish, shame, and rage, / Danged down to hell her loathsome carriage’ (lines 817–18). Night's irritation arises from the fact that she is mocked by Hesperus, about to usher in dawn. Just before this, the naked Hero blushes as she faces Leander, Marlowe famously likening her ‘ruddy cheek’ to a ‘false morn’ (lines 807, 805). Pushing under these lines is an epic convention: rosy-fingered

Dawn rising from the bed of her superannuated mate. Here she is, in one of Spenser's versions: 'faire *Aurora* from the deawy bed / Of aged *Tithone* gan her selfe to reare, / With rosie cheekes, for shame as blushing red' (*Faerie Queene*, I.xi.51, lines 2–3). Warren Boutcher brilliantly points out that the final lines of *Hero and Leander* recall the end of the *Aeneid*: 'vitaque cum gemitu fugit indignata sub umbras' (*Aeneid*, XII, 952) (his life, full of rage, fled down to the shades with a moan). But they do not, I believe, 'conflate the shamed figure of Hero with that of Night', as he suggests.<sup>61</sup> In contrast to Spenser, Marlowe studiously detaches the word 'shame' from Hero's dawn-like blush and gives it to dawn's opponent, Night. Though Hero 'sigh[s] to think upon th'approaching sun' (l. 786), the poem sees things differently: down to its precipitous, last extant line, the only view we get of the exposed, dawn-like Hero is through the admiring eyes of Leander. All other thoughts are the readers'. Boutcher's comment does however point to the conscious knottiness of these lines.<sup>62</sup> In sending Night to hell, Marlowe is sending to hell, too, a hefty weight of convention that aligns pleasure with shame, night, and death. This is where his poem ends, with that entirely unconventional figuration of the break of day as the demise of night, and Hero in naked splendour by her callow lover. Marlowe's reference to dawn before night makes it as difficult to grasp this ending, as it is not to read beyond his poem to the death that catches up with these lovers in other versions of the story, 'as the night the day'. Yet by alluding to the end of the *Aeneid*, I think Marlowe tells his readers that this *is* where the poem ends. The *Aeneid*'s conclusion is sudden, ambivalent, and difficult. In its refusal to look forward to the glory of Rome and marriage with Lavinia, it seemed spurious to many early modern readers, hence the popularity of supplements to the epic.<sup>63</sup> To read Marlowe's *Hero and Leander* as an 'Ovidian epyllion' is similarly to find, along with its 1598 publishers and completers, that 'Desunt nonnulla' ('A part is missing'). To read it with an epic subconscious is to feel the



difficulty and the thrill of narrating erotic experience as Marlowe has done. In 1594 Barnfield was, I think, such a reader, if the shameless finale of his own epyllion is something to go by:

For Aurora mounts before he leaves to be mounting:

And Astraea fades before she faints to be falling:

(Helen a light Huswife, now a lightsome starre in Olympus.) (sig. G4v)

## Notes

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<sup>1</sup> Poetry reading, 1 July 2016, University of York, in the context of *Poetic Measures: A Variable Measure for the Fixed*.

<sup>2</sup> Richard Barnfield, *The Affectionate Shepherd* (London: John Danter for T. G[ubbin] and E. N[ewman], 1594), sigs G3v-G4v. For biographical information on Barnfield, see Andrew Worrall, 'Biographical introduction: Barnfield's feast of "all varietie"', in K. Borris and G. Klawitter (eds), *The Affectionate Shepherd: Celebrating Richard Barnfield* (Selinsgrove: Susquehanna University Press, 2001), pp. 25–40. The poem receives no extended discussion in this collection of essays - the only one dedicated to Barnfield to my knowledge - but see Richard Barnfield, *The Complete Poems*, ed. G. Klawitter (Selinsgrove: Susquehanna University Press, 1990), p. 34; Harry Morris, 'Richard Barnfield, *Amyntas*, and the Sidney circle', *Proceedings of the Modern Language Association*, 74 (1959), 318–24, pp. 322–4; and

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Walter F. Staton and Harry Morris, 'Thomas Watson and Abraham Fraunce', *Proceedings of the Modern Language Association*, 76 (1961), 150–3.

<sup>3</sup> The myth of Helen's catasterism is told in Natale Conti, *Mythologia* (Venice: [Comin da Trino], 1567), p. 248v (VIII, ix).

<sup>4</sup> Thomas Nash, 'To the Gentlemen Students of both Universities', in Robert Greene, *Menaphon* (London: T[homas] O[rwin] for Sampson Clarke, 1589), sigs \*\*r-A3r, sig. Ar.

<sup>5</sup> Abraham Fraunce, *The Lamentations of Amyntas* (London: John Wolfe for Thomas Newman and Thomas Gubbin, 1587), sig. Ar.

<sup>6</sup> Thomas Nash, *The Apologie of Pierce Pennilesse: Or, Strange Newes* (London: John Danter, 1593), sig. G3r.

<sup>7</sup> Ronald B. McKerrow (ed.), *Greenes Newes both from Heauen and Hell (1593) and Greenes Funeralls (1594)* (London: Sidgwick and Jackson, 1911), p. 79; on the similarity between this sonnet and *Hellens Rape*, see p. ix.

<sup>8</sup> On Barnfield and Stanley, see Leo Daugherty, 'The question of topical allusion in Richard Barnfield's pastoral verse', in Borris and Klawitter (eds), *The Affectionate Shepherd*, pp. 45–61. On Stanley's parody, see Steven May, 'Spenser's "Amyntas": three poems by Ferdinando Stanley, Lord Strange, Fifth Earl of Derby', *Modern Philology*, 70 (1972), 49–52. The strongest argument in favour of Stanley as Amintas (rather than Fraunce or Watson) is that 'Sonnet iv' in *Greenes Funeralls* suggests he is alive: see McKerrow (ed.), *Greenes Funeralls*, p. 75.

<sup>9</sup> Barnfield, *The Affectionate Shepheard*, sig. E4v.

<sup>10</sup> Colluthus, *Helenaë raptus*, trans. and ed. M. Neander (Basel: J. Oporinus, 1559), p. 35. Emphasis mine. On Neander's Colluthus, see Ángel Ruiz Pérez, 'Historia editorial del *Rapto de Helena* de Coluto', in I. J. García Pinilla and S. Talavera Cuesta (eds), *Charisterion*

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*Francisco Martín García oblatum* (Cuenca: Universidad de Castilla-La Mancha, 2004), pp. 339–61, 340–2.

<sup>11</sup> See Colluthus, *L'Enlèvement d'Hélène*, trans. and ed. P. Orsini, reprinted edn (Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 2002), lines 103–6, but also Lucia Prauscello, 'Colluthus' pastoral traditions: narrative strategies and bucolic criticism in the *Abduction of Helen*', in K. Carvounis and R. Hunter (eds), *Signs of Life? New Contexts for Later Greek Hexameter Poetry* (= *Ramus*, 37 (2008)), 173–90, for a superb account of why Paris keeps such multifarious flocks.

<sup>12</sup> References to all of Watson's works will be to line numbers in Thomas Watson, *The Complete Works*, ed. D. F. Sutton (2011), [www.philological.bham.ac.uk/watson/](http://www.philological.bham.ac.uk/watson/) (accessed 25 January 2016). In his 'Introduction' to *Helenae Raptus*, Sutton argues that Watson used René Perdrier's crib, based on two shared mistakes in the Greek; in fact, these 'errors' correspond to textual problems at lines 67b and 242 common to all early editions, and Watson more often has Neander's frequently reprinted translation at the back of his mind.

<sup>13</sup> Thomas Nash, *Have with you to Saffron Walden* (London: John Danter, 1596), sigs T3v–T4r. On Watson, see Michael J. Hirrel, 'Thomas Watson, playwright: origins of modern English drama', in David McInnis and Matthew Steggle (eds), *Lost Plays in Shakespeare's England* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014), pp. 187–207.

<sup>14</sup> Colluthus, *Helenae raptus*, pp. 15, [3].

<sup>15</sup> Paul W. Miller, 'The Elizabethan minor epic', *Studies in Philology*, 55 (1958), 31–8; Elizabeth Story Donno (ed.), *Elizabethan Minor Epics* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1963). Donno's was the basis for later important anthologies, such as Sandra Clark (ed.), *Amorous Rites: Elizabethan Erotic Verse* (London: Everyman, 1994).

<sup>16</sup> See Miller, 'The Elizabethan minor epic', p. 31 and e.g. Hallett Smith, *Elizabethan Poetry: A Study in Conventions, Meaning, and Expression* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1952), pp. 64–101; Walter F. Staton, 'The influence of Thomas Watson on Elizabethan

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Ovidian poetry', *Studies in the Renaissance*, 6 (1959), 243–50, p. 243. For Douglas Bush, *Hero and Leander* and *Venus and Adonis* represented the 'twin peaks of the Ovidian tradition in England', a tradition of 'spicy amorous poems', *Mythology and the Renaissance Tradition in English Poetry*, revised edn (New York: Norton, 1963), p. 137.

<sup>17</sup> M. M. Crump, *The Epyllion from Theocritus to Ovid [1931]* (Bristol: Bristol Classical Press, 1997), pp. 22–4.

<sup>18</sup> Walter Allen, 'The non-existent classical epyllion', *Studies in Philology*, 55 (1958), 515–18, p. 515. This was a recapitulation, for the benefit of English scholars, of his views in 'The epyllion: a chapter in the history of literary criticism', *Transactions and Proceedings of the American Philological Association*, 71 (1940), 1–26.

<sup>19</sup> Always with a caveat about its ancient pedigree. See Donno (ed.), *Elizabethan Minor Epics*, p. 6; Clark (ed.), *Amorous Rites*, pp. xxvii, l; William Keach, *Elizabethan Erotic Narratives: Irony and Pathos in the Ovidian Poetry of Shakespeare, Marlowe and Their Contemporaries* (Sussex: Harvester, 1977), pp. xvi–xvii; Clark Hulse, *Metamorphic Verse: The Elizabethan Minor Epic* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1981), p. 22; Jim Ellis, *Sexuality and Citizenship: Metamorphosis in Elizabethan Erotic Verse* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2003), pp. 4, 241n6; Georgia E. Brown, *Redefining Elizabethan Literature* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), p. 111n19.

<sup>20</sup> Including in all of the studies mentioned in the previous note. A notable recent exception is William P. Weaver, *Untutored Lines: The Making of the English Epyllion* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2012), which discusses this tradition of poems in connection with Aphthonius' *Progymnasmata*.

<sup>21</sup> Brown, *Redefining Elizabethan Literature*, p. 152.

<sup>22</sup> Most recently and comprehensively, in Roland Béhar, 'Musæum ante omnes... : la fortune critique de Musée dans la théorie poétique espagnole du *Siglo de Oro*', *e-Spania*, 2015,

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<http://e-spania.revues.org/24615> (accessed 2nd July 2016), but as early as Bush, *Mythology*, pp. 123-24, and see Warren Boutcher, ““Who taught thee rhetoricke to deceive a maid?”: Christopher Marlowe’s *Hero and Leander*, Juan Boscán’s *Leandro*, and Renaissance vernacular humanism’, *Comparative Literature*, 51 (2000), 11–52 and Gordon Braden, *The Classics and English Renaissance Poetry: Three Case Studies* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1978), pp. 81–118.

<sup>23</sup> First published as Aesop, *et al.*, *Aesopi Phrygis vita et fabellae...* (Basel: J. Froben, 1517/18). As well as Aesop’s fables and Musaeus, this often reproduced collection contained the *Battle of the Frogs and Mice* and the mock-tragedy *Battle of the Cats and Mice* by Theodoros Prodromos (12<sup>th</sup> c. CE).

<sup>24</sup> Gager’s translation is extant as BL Additional MS 22583, pp. 41–56.

<sup>25</sup> See e.g. Abraham Fraunce, *The Arcadian Rhetorike* (London: Thomas Orwin, 1588), where he often quotes Boscán’s *Leandro*.

<sup>26</sup> With the exception of Ruiz Pérez, ‘Historia editorial’, who nevertheless overlooks the interrelated reception of the *Iliad* and Colluthus.

<sup>27</sup> St John’s College, Cambridge, Cc.16.11, flyleaf, part of a fuller chart. The reader could be referring to Homer, *Ilias et Odyssea. Secunda editio*, ed. F. Portus ([Geneva]: J. Crispinus, 1570), the first Homeric edition to print the poem, or any of the many subsequent ones in this highly portable format.

<sup>28</sup> Jean de Sponde (ed.), *Homeri Quae Extant Omnia*, 2 vols (Basel: E. Episcopius, 1583), vol. 1, p. 43.

<sup>29</sup> Helius Eobanus Hessus, *Coluthi ... De Raptu Helenes... Epithalamion Helenes ex Theocrito. Moschi Amor fugitiuus* (Erfurt: Melchior I Sachse, 1534); Paolo La Badessa, *Il Rapimento di Helena* (Messina: heir of Petruccio Spira, 1571); Sieur Du Souhait, *L’Iliade*

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*d'Homere ... Ensemble le Ravissement d'Helene* (Paris: Pierre Chevalier, 1620); Federico Malipiero, *L'Iliada d'Omero ... Il Ratto d'Elena* (Venice: Paolo Baglioni, 1642).

<sup>30</sup> E. Sherburne, *Salmacis ... The Rape of Helen, A Comment thereon* (London: W. Hunt for T. Dring, 1651), p. [44].

<sup>31</sup> George Chapman, *The Crowne of all Homers Workes* (London: John Bill, 1624), sig. [¶4]r; Philipp Melanchthon, *Opera Omnia*, ed. K. G. Bretschneider and H. E. Bindseil, 28 vols (Halle an der Saale/Braunschweig: C. A. Schwetschke, 1834–60), vol. 11, p. 118.

<sup>32</sup> On the poem's pedagogical function, see Paul Botley, *Learning Greek in Western Europe, 1396-1529* (Philadelphia: American Philosophical Society, 2010), p. 85; see also Jessica Wolfe, *Homer and the Question of Strife from Erasmus to Hobbes* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2015), pp. 112–75.

<sup>33</sup> Homer, *et al.*, *Οἱ τῆς ἡρωϊκῆς ποιήσεως πρωτεύοντες ποιηταί*, ed. H. Estienne ([Geneva]: H. Estienne, 1566).

<sup>34</sup> Julius Caesar Scaliger, *Poetices Libri Septem*, ed. L. Deitz, G. Vogt-Spira and M. Fuhrmann, 5 vols (Stuttgart-Bad Cannstatt: Frommann-Holzboog, 1994–2003), vol. 1, p. 132 (I.vi 12a).

<sup>35</sup> Lodovico Castelvetro, *Poetica d'Aristotele Vulgarizzata, et Sposta* (Basel: Pietro de Sedabonis, 1576), p. 533.

<sup>36</sup> Alfonso López Pinciano, *Philosophia Antigua Poetica* (Madrid: Thomas Junti, 1596), pp. 297, 470; see Béhar, §31.

<sup>37</sup> López Pinciano, *Philosophia*, pp. 273–4.

<sup>38</sup> Scaliger, *Poetice*, vol. 3, p. 24

<sup>39</sup> All of the Aldine editions of *Hero and Leander*, starting with Musaeus, *Ποιημάτιον τὰ καθ' ἡρώ καὶ Λέανδρον* (Venice: Aldus Manutius, 1495–97), refer to it as a 'ποιημάτιον'. Froben describes the *Batrachomyomachia* as a 'poemation' at [Homer], *Batrachomyomachia* (Basel:

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J. Froben, 1518), p. 3 (in Aesop, *et al.*, *Aesopi Phrygis vita et fabellae...*). Martinus Crusius and Henri II Estienne both refer to the *Abduction of Helen* and the *Batrachomyomachia* as ‘poematia’: see Martinus Crusius, *Commentationes in Primum Librum Iliados Homeri ... [(1594). In Homerum Prolegomena (1581)]* ([Heidelberg]: Gotthardus Voegelinus, 1612), sig. \*\*6r; ‘In *Batrachomyomachiam* Homeri ... praefatio’, in *Philologiae Barbaro-Graecae Pars Altera*, ed. J.M. Lang (Altdorf: J.W. Kohles, 1707), pp. 42–60, p. 53; Homer, *Homeri Poemata Duo, Ilias et Odyssea, Sive Ulyssea. Alia Item Carmina Ejusdem* ([Geneva]: [Henri II Estienne], 1588), sigs ¶iir, ¶iiir.

<sup>40</sup> E.g. Sponde uses ‘poemation’ to refer to epigrams ascribed to Homer on the title-page of his edition.

<sup>41</sup> Crusius, ‘In *Batrachomyomachiam*’, p. 42.

<sup>42</sup> Quoted in David Scott Wilson-Okamura, *Virgil in the Renaissance* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), p. 89.

<sup>43</sup> Wolfe, *Homer and the Question of Strife*, p. 124. See also Colin Burrow, ‘English Renaissance readers and the *Appendix Vergiliana*’, *Proceedings of the Virgil Society*, 26 (2008), 1–16.

<sup>44</sup> Musaeus, *Ποιημάτων*, sig. αv.

<sup>45</sup> Neander and Sherburne both explain the *cestos*’s Homeric origins in their commentaries: Colluthus, *Helenae raptus*, p. 64; Sherburne, *Salmacis...*, p. 73.

<sup>46</sup> In the poem’s dedicatory epistle to ‘Henrico Noello’.

<sup>47</sup> On Johnson’s teaching of the *Batrachomyomachia*, see Tania Demetriou and Tanya Pollard, ‘Homer, Greek tragedy, and the early modern stage: an introduction’, in T. Demetriou and T. Pollard (eds), *Homer, Greek Tragedy, and the Early Modern Stage* (= *Classical Receptions Journal*, 9 (2017)), [forthcoming, pages tbc]. Watson was probably at

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the school c. 1563–70: see Ibrahim Alhiyari, ‘Thomas Watson: New Biographical Evidence and his Translation of *Antigone*’, PhD Dissertation, Texas Tech University, 2006.

<sup>48</sup> Staton, ‘The influence of Thomas Watson’.

<sup>49</sup> William Covell, *Polimanteia* (Cambridge and London: John Legate and J. Orwin, 1595), sig. R3r.

<sup>50</sup> Charles Nicholl, ‘Marlowe, Christopher (bap. 1564, d. 1593)’, *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004, [www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/18079](http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/18079) (accessed 25 July 2016).

<sup>51</sup> See Robert F. W. Smith, ‘John Trussell: a life (1575–1648)’, PhD Dissertation, University of Southampton, 2013, pp. 27–28.

<sup>52</sup> E.g. Conti, *Mythologiae*, pp. 199r; 219r, and see Laurie Maguire, *Helen of Troy: From Homer to Hollywood* (Chichester: Wiley-Blackwell, 2009), p. 4.

<sup>53</sup> When Theseus disappears after the rape (lines 223–8), Helen decides to hide her situation (301–12), but betrays herself to her maids, one of whom recommends concealment, based on the happy precedent of Helen’s mother Leda (529–666). Finally, Leda herself comes up with the solution of the marriage to Menelaus (715–38), and Helen’s ‘obloquy’ is successfully ‘metamorphosed’ on the wedding night (853–64). References to M. A. Shaaber, ‘*The First Rape of Faire Hellen* by John Trussell’, *Shakespeare Quarterly*, 8:4 (1957), 407–48.

<sup>54</sup> Christopher Marlowe, *The Collected Poems*, ed. Patrick Cheney and Brian J. Striar (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006); references are to the continuous line-numbering system in this edition.

<sup>55</sup> Cp Nonnus, *Dionysiaca*, XLII, 271: ‘μελίφρονα θεσμὸν Ἑρώτων’.

<sup>56</sup> For the argument that the poem draws directly on Colluthus, see Pamela Royston Macfie, ‘Allusion as plunder: Marlowe’s *Hero and Leander* and Colluthus’ *Rape of Helen*’, *Renaissance Papers* (2013), 31–42.



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<sup>57</sup> Patrick Honan, *Christopher Marlowe: Poet and Spy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), p. 305.

<sup>58</sup> See Marion Campbell, “‘Desunt nonnulla’: The construction of Marlowe’s *Hero and Leander* as an unfinished poem’, *English Literary History*, 51 (1984), 241–68, for a critical discussion of the arguments in favour of the poem’s incompleteness, and p. 246 for her assessment of the ‘external evidence’ as ‘unreliable’. Campbell does not discuss Richard Carew’s reference to ‘[M]arlowe’s fragment’ in ‘The excellency of the English tongue’ (British Library MS Cotton Julius F XI, fol. 267v) which is earlier, i.e. c. 1595–96. While the fact that Carew misspells Marlowe as ‘Barlowe’ suggests no closeness to the poet’s circle, it is also interesting that when he twins Marlowe’s poem and Shakespeare’s *Venus and Adonis*, he compares them not to Ovid’s poem, but to an ancient epyllion, Catullus 64. For a fascinating link between Marlowe’s deferred ending and Colluthus, see the conclusion of Macfie, ‘Allusion as plunder’.

<sup>59</sup> Martinus Crusius, *Poematum Graecorum Libri Duo ... Orationum Liber Unus*, 3 vols (Basle: J. Oporinus, 1567), vol. 3, p. 30; Cp. Musaeus’s ‘τίς σε πολυπλανέων ἐπέων ἐδίδαξε κελεύθους;’ (line 75: Who taught you the devious paths of eloquence?).

<sup>60</sup> Scaliger, *Poetice*, vol. 4, pp. 54–55 (V.ii.215b).

<sup>61</sup> Boutcher, “‘Who Taught Thee Rhetoricke...’”, p. 47.

<sup>62</sup> The inverse dynamics of night and day throughout the poem are discussed in Braden, *The Classics and English Renaissance Poetry*, pp. 150–3; on shame and the epyllion, see Brown, *Redefining Elizabethan Literature*.

<sup>63</sup> Wilson-Okamura, *Virgil in the Renaissance*, pp. 237–47 and 239n174 for bibliography on others.